

USAFE, Liberian medics team up to save lives

2/12/2007 - MONROVIA, Liberia (AFNEWS) -- Within minutes of completing two days of medical training in Liberia taught by medics from U.S. Air Forces in Europe Airmen, 23 Armed Forces of Liberia medical technicians were put to the test when they responded to a high-speed vehicle rollover Jan. 28 here.

Outside the gate to the remote military barracks where the eight USAFE medics were conducting medical training for the AFL, a single vehicle had veered off the road, ejecting the driver from the vehicle.

Immediately, a nurse, medical technician and seven USAFE medics left for the scene. Leading the response team was Maj. (Dr.) Kimberly Pietszak, the only physician within 30 miles of the scene. Other Airmen who also went to the accident scene were Senior Master Sgt. Daryl Webb, Master Sgt. Randall Ivory and Tech. Sgt. Elizabeth Burrell, all from Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

Upon the medics' arrival, patients were quickly assessed and triaged. There were four victims in all, including the driver who had been ejected from the vehicle. Before departing with the first patient for the hospital, the nurse called for additional assistance.

That assistance came from the only place it could: the new AFL medical technician students who had completed patient assessment and treatment exams only a few minutes earlier. These students, who had learned how to quickly treat and transport victims of trauma, would not have to wait to use their newly-taught skills; they were going to put to use their medical abilities to help save lives just minutes after finishing their training.

Six students were assigned to assist at the scene and within minutes were providing care to the injured. They took vital signs, helped secure a patient to a spine board and led a litter team loading a patient into the ambulance. Within 20 minutes the remaining medics rushed to the hospital with the remaining victims, a litter patient and two ambulatory patients.

"They performed magnificently," said Lt. Col. Stephen Sales, the 435th Air Base Wing director of staff and deployed team chief. "Their performance is a testament both to their dedication to learn and to the skill of their instructors."

For Major Pietszak, the opportunity to help in a capacity beyond that of a trainer was especially meaningful.

"It is a once in a lifetime experience to be in another country training military medics, but it is an even more rewarding experience to also have the chance to offer needed medical care to the citizens of the country," she said.

(Courtesy of 435th Air Base Wing Public Affairs)
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